

CHARLES DARWIN'S DECEPTION

April 22, 2010 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

In his autobiography, Charles Darwin presented himself as a man who was not deeply influenced by the skeptical environment in which he grew up. He claimed, in fact, to have believed the Bible as a Cambridge student and even during his voyage on the Beagle and only gradually to have become a skeptic *solely as the product of independent scientific investigation*. This is a self-serving myth.

In fact, he never was a Bible believer, never professed Christ as his Saviour, and was influenced deeply by skepticism from a young age.

Charles' grandfather, Erasmus Darwin, was a famous skeptic who worshipped "a distant Deity ... the vast Unknown." Erasmus' skepticism was so radical that it even shocked the Unitarian transcendentalist Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who called him "an Atheist." Josiah Wedgwood, Erasmus' close friend and the grandfather of Charles' wife Emma, was a Unitarian who rejected the Deity of Christ and the infallibility of the Bible. Josiah's famous Wedgwood pottery firm honored the infamous Unitarian Joseph Priestly with a medallion featuring his likeness. The two grandfathers bequeathed "a mixture of freethought and radical Christianity to their grandchildren" (Adrian Desmond, *Darwin*, p. 5). Erasmus published a very popular two-volume work entitled *Zoonomia*, which presented nearly the same evolutionary theories later popularized by Charles. Erasmus added an evolutionary symbol to the Darwin family' coat of arms, consisting of three scallop shells and the motto *E Conchis Omnia* ("all things out of shells"). The meaning was that all things had evolved out of the sea.

Charles' father, Robert, was an atheist who adopted *E Conchis Omnia* as his personal motto.

Charles' elder brother Erasmus, named after their famous grandfather, was a radical skeptic in his own right and his house was a center for "freethinking" in London. Charles loved to spend time there, where "the buzz was radical and Dissenting and 'heterodoxy was the norm'" (Desmond, p. 216). Erasmus' intimate lady friend, the Unitarian Harriet Martineau, did not believe in miracles. She translated the atheist Auguste Comte's pantheistic *Positive Philosophy* into English. Comte's objective was to replace the religion of God with "the religion of humanity."

As a young medical student at Edinburgh University, Charles was drawn to the most radical skeptics, and they to him. He was elected to the Plinian Society in 1826, at a time when "it had been penetrated by radical students--fiery, freethinking democrats who demanded that science be based on physical causes, not supernatural forces" (Desmond, p. 31). Darwin was invited for the very reason that his grandfather Erasmus was a skeptical evolutionist. Darwin's membership was sponsored by William Browne, who "had no time for souls and saints." Browne hated the Bible

and the doctrine of creation, and when Charles Bell proposed that the human face reflects man's moral nature and is an evidence of divine creation, Browne opposed him. Brown stirred up a great controversy when he lectured that "mind and consciousness are not spiritual entities, separate from the body; they are simple spinoffs from the brain activity" (Howard Gruber, *Darwin on Man*, p. 479). The other student inducted into the Plinian Society with Darwin was the Unitarian-educated William Greg, who was "just as heretical as Browne" and hated creationism.

Darwin's closest friend at Edinburgh was professor Robert Edmond Grant, another member of the Plinian society. He was "an uncompromising evolutionist" who believed that "the origin and evolution of life were due simply to physical and chemical forces, all obeying natural laws" (Desmond, p. 34). A man for whom "nothing was sacred," he was "savagely anti-Christian" (p. 40). Grant loved Erasmus Darwin's *Zoonomia*. He believed in spontaneous generation of life from "monads" or "elementary living particles" and that the sponge is the parent of higher animals.

Darwin claimed that before the publication of *On the Origin of Species* he "never happened to come across a single naturalist who seemed to doubt about the permanence of species" (Autobiography, p. 124). That is an amazing lie. His own grandfather believed in the transmutation of species and taught it in his popular book, which Charles had read twice. Jean Baptiste Lamarck had presented transmutation in his very influential 1809 *Philosophie Zoologique*, which Darwin had read. We have seen that Darwin was deeply exposed to transmutation theories at Edinburgh University. Darwin also read Robert Chambers' 1844 *Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation*, which described all of creation evolving from atoms. In London, men such as James Gully were teaching "transmutation" before Darwin published his book. Gully translated Friedrich Tiedemann's "evolutionary treatise on *Comparative Physiology*" (Desmond, *Darwin*, p. 219).

Darwin claimed that he came to his evolutionary theories "quite independently" of Humboldt, Lamarck, and others. But even sympathetic biographers such as Gertrude Himmelfarb characterize that as "not entirely candid." Indeed, Darwin had read many books promoting evolutionary ideas very similar to those he later promoted, and it is impossible to form a theory independently--after the fact--of the things you have actually read!

Darwin protested that his book *On the Origin of Species* was not a product of something that was "in the air" and denied that "men's minds were prepared for it." This is nonsense. Social historian Himmelfarb observes, "It was in the air and men were prepared for it--the public for evolution in general, and the scientific community for some special theory that Darwin was known to be working on" (*Darwin and the Darwinian Evolution*, p. 240). Unitarianism and German "higher criticism" and humanistic philosophy had greatly weakened biblical faith in the Church of England and in society at large.

I have documented this extensively in *The Modern Textual Criticism Hall of Shame*, which is available from Way of Life Literature in both print and e-book editions.

In *The Darwin Myth*, Benjamin Wiker observes,

“His was a close-knit family, and at least all the menfolk took for granted the self-evident truths of Enlightenment skepticism. The skepticism toward Christianity included an evolutionary account directed against the Christian, biblical doctrine of creation. It was part of the comfortable truisms passed on as a heritage. The family heritage allowed Charles to breathe in evolutionary doctrines that had been in the air for over a century ... Charles Darwin was a third generation evolutionist. He carefully read his grandfather’s *Zoonomia* very early on, he studied under the radical evolutionist Robert Grant while in medical school, he worked through the arguments of the French evolutionist Lamarck, and it would be hard to imagine him not discussing evolution with his father and brother around the table and in front of the fire--all this, before he had set foot on the *Beagle*. ... It means that the theory came before the facts. It was a philosophical and cultural inheritance before Charles Darwin himself went in search of evidence to support it” (pp. 136, 137).

The fact is that Darwin and his book were products of a skeptical environment. Darwin *could* have believed the Bible, because he had it in his possession and knew men that believed it, but he chose to reject it. There is no evidence that he even tried to find answers to the skeptical questions that he accepted, such as the question of suffering and homology and embryonic similarity and the geological record and the alleged contradictions in the Gospels. The answers were available, but Darwin was not interested in proving the Bible, only in disproving it. This willful skepticism has characterized committed Darwinists ever since and is a fulfillment of the prophecy of 2 Peter 3:3-6.

“Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.”

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